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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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COUNTING ONTARIO'S MIGHTY MOOSE

Of all North American Deer, the Moose is the mightiest. Any wanderer in the forest who has seen, or even heard, one of the great creatures of half a ton or more thundering through the obstructing underbrush, will have no doubt whatever about the bulk and strength of the animal. It is this impressive size and power of the moose which arouses admiration, not its appearance. With its high shoulders, immense muzzle, massive antlers and ungainly body, the bull moose has a grotesque figure that would have no chance at all in a beauty contest. Alces americana is a rugged beast that splashes through the shallows of a northern lake like a scow in a gale.

About this fascinating animal surprisingly little scientific information appears in the text books, as any hopeful reader soon discovers. It is to the credit of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology that this lack is now being remedied. Under the leadership of Mr. R. L. Peterson of the Museum's division of mammals, intensive research is in progress again this year as it was in 1946-'47. By canoe and plane, on foot through the tangled undergrowth of forests, Museum specialists have trailed the moose in areas from the remoter reaches of Algonquin Park to the islands of Lake Superior and the wilderness beyond that lake. It is a fact-finding project on a scale never before attempted in North America. Moose numbers, habits, haunts and every fact of value contributing to the knowledge and preservation of the species is being thoroughly investigated, so that the mighty moose might be saved from the doom of extinction.

EXPLORING ONTARIO'S SEA COAST

Ontario has a seacoast all her own, even if few citizens of the southern reaches of the province ever think about it, much less pay that salt-sea coast of the sub-Arctic region a visit. But that windswept stretch of coast from James Bay and following the south shore of Hudson's Bay to the Manitoba border, has a magnetic pull for naturalists eager for scientific research. There, they realize, are animals and plants, the Arctic's contribution to Ontario's flora and fauna, never found in the milder realms of the province. Of such interest and fascination is the quest for these rarer species, that ever since 1919, the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology has organized field parties to explore this sub-Arctic wilderness summer after summer. And since the Museum's exploratory research was commenced, the records of natural science for this part of Canada have been greatly enriched. Results of the survey of 1948 by a party just returned are now being tabulated. Cape Henrietta Maria, 300 miles north of Moosonee, was the headquarters for the current study of flora and fauna by members of the staff of the Museum. Land birds and waterfowl, Arctic foxes and many other animals found in the remote northern latitude under exploration, are among the most interesting exhibits always on view at the Museum.

DRAMA OF THE DINOSAURS

A figure grotesque and absurd
Is a Dinosaur, disinterred,
But Old Stick-in-the-Mud
Tells of Time at its bud,
And the curious events that occurred.

In lilting limerick form, a visitor to the Royal Ontario Museum so expressed his opinion of the Dinosaur skeletons he saw in the division of Palaeontology there. And the rhyme tells the feeling of many other visitors. For the reassembled, petrified bones of the Dinosaurs and other giant reptiles of millions of years ago, do teach many fascinating things about that remote period when reptiles ruled the earth. From these remains not only the appearance of the long-extinct creatures can be ascertained as they lived in the flesh; but they are of the first importance in the graphic reproduction of the hot and swampy landscape they inhabited. Some of the monsters whose fossilized bones have been retrieved from their rocky burial in Western Canada and elsewhere, weighed as much as 40 tons—the approximate weight of eight elephants—and the length of some specimens reached to 90 feet. At the Royal Ontario Museum, the famous collection of Dinosaur and other skeletal remains of equal antiquity, attracts a constantly increasing number of visitors who find the Drama of the Dinosaurs fascinating.

AERIAL ANGLERS

Wealthy anglers these modern days sometimes use their own or hired hydroplanes to carry them to the remoter lakes of northern Ontario where the fishing is sure to bring thrills. There's really nothing new, though, in the idea. Ospreys, or fishhawks, have been aerial anglers all down the centuries. These great birds, too, have always been dressed for the sport with another so-called "modern" accessory—oilskins. Or at least, with something just as efficient; plumage thoroughly waterproofed with oil. Vacationists who have watched the osprey fishing in some shining lake of the Northland; who have admired the careful, preliminary patrol of the lake shore, the sudden dive with talons poised for the kill, and the adjustment of the prey head foremost for transportation to the bird's enormous nest, develop a keen interest in this bird. They single it out for special study at the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology from among thousands of birds there exhibited. They want a close-up examination of the equipment of that aerial angler of uncanny skill.

SEVENTY THOUSAND BIRDS

Classified and arranged in cabinets with original features, by ornithologist L. L. Snyder and his associates, there are more than 70,000 native and exotic birds available for study at the Royal Ontario Museum. It is the largest of such scientific collections in Canada, and has few rivals elsewhere.